

REVOLUTION

socialist youth movement

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open
the
borders
OF FORTRESS EUROPE



solidarity with immigrant workers

what the hell is happening in iraq?



The inherent contradictions with the invasion and occupation of Iraq are beginning to blow up in the face of the US and their lackies in the Blairite government in the UK. The US and UK forces are very good at destroying countries, but not so good when it comes to actually holding one. The massive uprisings in Falluja and Najaf have proved that the Iraqi people are not so happy with their 'liberation'. They may have been happy to see the fall of Saddam but what followed was tyranny, lawlessness and violence. This is not what the Americans and British told us was going to happen when they forced the world into a war – a war that only serves corporate interests.

But the Iraqi people are beginning to say enough is enough. They are giving their lives to resist the occupation. They are the ones who are working to deliver the real liberation - liberation from the imperialist occupiers who are tearing their country apart and selling off their resources. The Americans however will not easily give up their interests in Iraq. They are ruthlessly trying to crush the uprisings and imposing a reign of terror on innocent citizens whom they brand terrorists, insurgents and agents of Saddam. This is absurd. The Americans may have rid the country of Saddam but they have replaced his regime with much worse fear and oppression. This is what the uprisings are trying to put an end to.

The Shia Cleric Al Sadr is a leader of one of the uprisings. The Americans have captured one of his aides and shut down his newspaper in an attempt to silence him. This has only served to spark mass protests, which quickly spread like wildfire across the country. Shia and Sunni population centres in the north and south have exploded with rage – uniting in their hatred of the American occupation. Districts of Baghdad have also answered the call to arms and started shooting coalition soldiers in the streets.



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The coalition has lost control of the town of Kut and the city of Fallujah. The body count as of mid April for 'liberated' Iraqis is over 800 - 400 of these are women and children. In Falluja it is reported that the delivery of humanitarian aid is severely restricted due to US snipers shooting indiscriminately. People are being shot in their homes and on the streets according to reports in the Guardian. Accessing hospitals in this town is impossible. Women and children have been forced to evacuate the town. It is feared that when a large proportion have left the Americans will launch a full-scale attack, destroying the city completely.

At the time of writing Blair is in the midst of crisis talks with Bush. Many Iraqis celebrated the fall of Saddam Hussein and his regime because they thought it would mean a significant improvement in their lives, allow them to determine their future and given them the opportunity to rebuild their country quickly. The US/UK occupation did none of these things. The economic exploitation of Iraq, the privatisation of all of its services and industry to western business and banks, and the continued brutality of the occupation forces meant that Iraq was a powder keg waiting to explode. The truth is that these insurgents are not foreign troublemakers in Iraq, nor are they all Al-Qaeda terrorists, neither are they Saddam loyalists. They are Iraqis. This is an uprising, and it is a fight between the occupiers and the occupied.

So what about this transfer of power on June 30th? Bush knows that he cannot hand over power, who would it go to? The Iraqi National council? A toothless body with no credibility, no police and no support? Since the panic summit he has had with Blair on April 16th, Bush has started talk of getting the involving the United Nations - realising that they needed to make their occupation seem legitimate. The governments of Germany and Japan have advised their citizens to leave Iraq at the earliest opportunity fearing their lives among the violence. Bush now wants UN involvement so that the US and Britain don't look like they are on their own in the occupation - especially since the new Spanish government have vowed to pull out their troops.

What we are witnessing is the start of the Iraqi Intifada, and the Coalition is going to learn a brutal lesson about the dangers of imperialism. The more people you piss off the harder it is to stem the tide of resistance.

The goal of the Iraqi youth and workers must be to unite with the forces resisting the occupation, and fight together to kick out the imperialists. The Islamists are the only group who are taking leadership of the uprisings. REVOLUTION urges workers and youth to work with them and fight the occupation but also argue against Islamist ideology. The workers and youth must rally under the banner of socialism to fight for a workers state in the country; they must aim to turn the resistance into a revolution – one that will shake the imperialists to the core. Meetings should be held where democratic military planning can be organised and action taken. Workers in all industries and services should strike immediately, arm themselves, and defend their workplaces and homes from the hired security thugs and soldiers of the coalition.

Out of the fires of this uprising a new social and economic order needs to be created, one that can reverse the years of damage done by sanctions and war.

by simon h (shef) and sue a (london)

news you haven't heard

You have probably heard about the Iranian diplomat shot dead outside the Embassy and about the American soldier being held by the resistance, but here are some things you probably don't know:

★ A GMC vehicle was driving to Baghdad along the highway from Jordan - it was attacked by an American helicopter gunship killing the passenger and seriously injuring the driver.

★ In Mosul a family were massacred when a US rocket hit their house - for no reason. The Americans also killed people outside the house in the street and in shops.

★ In Abu Ghraib just outside Baghdad, no one has been able to leave/enter the town for over one week because the Americans are blocking the roads. If the children see a helicopter or tank attacking someone, the parents say 'why, this is democracy and freedom' - the children are now scared of 'democracy and freedom'.

★ All this news is off Al Iraqia news channel - funded by the Pentagon. Everyone interviewed on there speaks against the Americans and the occupation - even on their own channel!!

if you want up-to-date eyewitness accounts of events in Iraq, send an email to:
Kevin & Helen Williams
welshhumanshields@hotmail.com

Fighting for the rights of youth

BY TOMMY MAC LIVERPOOL

Votes at 16

The Labour Party has recently been promoting the idea of giving votes to 16 year olds and allowing 18 year olds to stand to be MPs. Why? Because they are trying to increase the pool of people that can vote, as ever increasing numbers of those who can already vote are alienated from the system and abstaining from parliamentary politics. It seems that the politicians have cynically realised there is no point in trying to gain the trust of the millions of people who have seen through their lies, and so are looking to the youth to fill the gap instead.

Young people's views should be valued as more than just something to make up the numbers!

As 16 year olds, we can leave school, be exploited working full time with no minimum wage, pay taxes on our meagre income, leave

home, and die in imperialist wars - it is unbelievable that we do not have the right to decide the political direction of our lives. What is stupid are the arguments put forward by the 'Votes at 16' campaign (backed by the Labour government), which say that it is due to citizenship lessons that 16 year olds will now "have the ability to make an informed choice in an election." This completely ignores the reality that young people have always been interested in politics but denied a voice. Youth make up the majority of the frontline in the anti-capitalist movement today and we were the loudest voices against the war.

Of course young people should be able to vote at 16 or even younger. It is a sign of the systematic oppression that young people face under capitalism that for years only over 18s have been allowed to have a say - and until 1969 only over 21s could vote! Arguments used to deny young people the vote were used in the past against other oppressed groups like women and the working class, saying that the rich old men know what's best for us – exploitation, war and super profits for the capitalists.

below the poverty line - raw deal for youth

The government's recent announcement of a new minimum wage for 16 year olds of £3 has been welcomed by the British Youth Council as "equal pay for equal work, a fair and decent minimum wage for 16 and 17-year-olds". The absurdity of this statement almost defies belief. Far from being equal pay for equal work, this new minimum wage only serves to reinforce the oppression of young people in the workplace and condemn us to poverty, dependence and ever-longer hours in jobs we hate.

£3 is not a decent minimum wage for 16 and 17 year olds! Paying someone £120 for a 40-hour week can only be described as super-exploitation and

slave labour. What planet do Blair and his cronies live on if they think anyone could survive with just £120 a week to pay for rent and food - let alone to have any semblance of a social life!

The current laws - where over-21s get £4.50 compared to just £3.80 for 18-21 year olds - are already unjust, unequal and force people into poverty. The minimum wage should be set at the very least at the EU decency threshold of £7.40ph or more, with equal pay for equal work regardless of age.

Amazingly, the shockingly low minimum wage for 16-17 year olds is made to look like a fortune compared to the minimum

paid to young apprentices of £70 a week, or the maximum £30 a week Education Maintenance Allowance paid to school students if they stay in school after their GCSEs. There is no way anyone could live independently on this little cash, forcing them to remain living at home regardless of their family situation.

All of this adds up not to a "New Deal" but to a raw deal for young people. We are sick of being paid less for the same work, being unpaid for training and running up huge debts if we choose to continue our education. We demand living grants for all young people from the age of 16, an equal minimum wage and free education!

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at the beginning of april, 5 revolution members went to the basque country to participate in an international youth meeting and the infamous gazte topagunea. this is their story...

"My life was going quite well, until I was about 13 and I made a fatal error: I decided for the proletarian revolution."

That's how a REVO activist from London expressed his feelings as the five of us waded through six centimetres of mud in the dark and the freezing rain to get to our tents, so we would survive till the next day and see the big bands that were scheduled.

A REVO activist from Berlin described it as following:
"My grandfather was in the Korean War, but I've been to Gazte Topagunea."

Welcome to the Basque Country, Euskal Herria, a nation of five million people straddling the Pyrennes, divided between Spain and France, pushed up against the Atlantic Ocean.

Gazte Topagunea, the Basque youth festival, despite weather that reminds more of death than of youthful struggle against oppression, has been amazing. Tens of thousands of Basque young people are so passionate about their struggle against the Spanish state and its "native" police force in this country (the "Zipaioak"), that they are willing to risk hypothermia, pneumonia, the flu, the common cold, and all the other discomforts associated with camping in Euskal Herria in the middle of April, in order to get together to express their language, their culture, and listen to some of their best bands.

Five delegates from REVOLUTION are here - four from REVO UK and one from REVO Germany. We have been running a stall in the tent for foreign political groups and have had a good response to our revolutionary, internationalist message: we support the right of all oppressed peoples to self-determination (e.g. a referendum in the Basque Country on independence from Spain, which the Spanish constitution explicitly prohibits), but also fight for the maximum unity of the working class of all countries in order to smash capitalism, the source of all oppression in the world. The world socialist revolution will free the Basques, the Catalans, the Galicians, and all the people of the world from national and economic oppression!

Last week there was an international meeting of youth organisations called by the socialist/left-nationalist Basque youth group SEGI. SEGI was prohibited as a "terrorist" organisation by the near-fascist Spanish government of Aznar two years ago, so the meeting had to be held in the "Northern Part" of the Basque Country, i.e. the part under French domination. Of the 13 groups present, most were fighting against national oppression (Basques, Galicians, Catalans, Irish, Sardinians, Corsicans, etc.) and groups supporting these struggles. REVOLUTION was the only group present that was 1) international, i.e. organised across national borders and 2) supportive of the national rights of oppressed peoples, but simultaneously critical of nationalism. We fight not for an independent Basque Country or an independent Catalonia, but for a Socialist United States of Europe and the World in which



national oppression of any type will disappear forever.

Despite clear ideological differences, we were able to reach consensus about a statement declaring common aims and means of struggle (see next page).

On Sunday there was a big closing rally, lots of slide shows and patriotic hymns and speeches and five or ten thousand people. One of the acts involved all the delegates from last week's international conference going up on stage with their flags, while Owen from Ogra Sinn Fein read a statement in Basque. As we were leaving, I got shoved out of the way to the stairs by three young men wearing white masks with tiny little holes for their eyes. They proceeded to burn a Spanish and a French flag while the masses of people cheered thunderously. Whether these three belonged to E.T.A is hard to say, but after 7 years of the Aznar government, I'm sure coming into physical contact with someone wearing a mask is enough to be arrested in the Spanish state.

agur iraultzaileak,
(revolutionary greetings,)
JOHN

P.S. we were in the Basque language weekly youth paper "Xirika"!

For a Youth Space and Youth Assembly at the European Social Forum

at the ESF preparatory meeting in Istanbul, all the groups that participated in the international meeting plus the Scottish Socialist Youth and the Federation of Young Greens support this call for a self-organised youth space at the next European Social Forum...

Across the globe young people suffer from a denial of basic rights – they are oppressed. At home we are denied the right to financial and legal independence and remain trapped in often repressive and bullying family relationships. Outside of the home we are deprived of decent education and forced into super exploitative low paid jobs.

Political organisations and movements cannot escape this systemic oppression being replicated in their own methods of organisation without making a conscious decision to challenge it both in society and within the movements themselves.

One of the most effective ways of challenging the oppression of

Supporting the youth struggles of the world! International meeting of youth organisations and movements '04

On April 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th of 2004, SEGI, the Basque independentist and revolutionary youth organisation invited different youth movement and organisations of Europe and the world to participate to an international youth meeting allowing each delegations to share the reality and experiences of each movement. These four days allowed us to deeper our links and learn more about each others difference but also help to discuss and debate on our common problems youth suffers.

We agree on the following points:

No to a Europe of the capitalist and no to the European Constitution:

- ★ Because the European Constitution does not respect the right of self determination of oppressed peoples.
- ★ Because Europe does not take into account the rights of all individuals as well as the working class and is based on a patriarchal system.
- ★ Because Europe promotes and maintains a capitalist system in a optic of actual globalisation.
- ★ On these different points we have reached a consensus on the organisation of a day of action which will denounces the European Constitution.

No to repression and criminalisation of all the youth fighting:

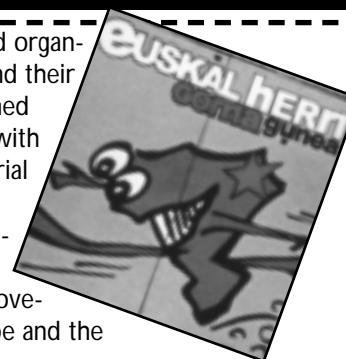
- ★ We denounce the repression and the criminalisation the youth is suffering around the world and we agree on organising different mobilisations and actions in solidarity that will support and defend oppressed and criminalised all youth.
- ★ We are prepared to support and commit ourselves to solidari-

young people within society is by allowing us to organise. That's why we believe that a self-organised youth space should be at the very heart of the ESF in Alexandra Palace, and – crucially - not a ghetto on the fringes of the event.

The anti-capitalist movement has been characterised by the emergence of a new young generation fighting back against the brutality of neo liberalism and war. Yet on the platforms of the Social Forum movement young people are barely to be seen. Self-organisation is one way in which we can propel ourselves forward to the centre of the movement - and give ourselves a powerful political voice.

Moreover, we need a strategy to take our movement forward so that it can become a real challenge to the power of the warmongers and neo-liberals. That's why it's ever more important that the ESF becomes a forum in which networking and decision making on joint action can take place. Given

ty work to youth movements and organisations such as Haika and Segi and their members who are actually detained and we are ready to denounces with our own capacity of action, the trial that will be held against them because we believe that they specific will leave an open door to the criminalisation of all youth movements and organisations in Europe and the World.



Social Forums and youth:

- ★ We feel that the voice must be taken into account in every different Social Forums and that the creation of a space for the youth in those forums is necessary.
- ★ We would like to underline the importance in attending actively to those Social Forums and we calling all youth networks to participate.

In order to develop further and created different dynamics on the following points we agree on the creation of a communication network and on annual meetings between youth.

SEGI, GHUVENTU INDEPENDENTISTA, JERC, CAJEI, REVOLUTION, YOUTH COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF SOUTH AFRICA, AMI, JCR(CASTILLE), BELIER, COLLETIVU'E SOS ISTUDENTES, INTERNATIONAL FORUM(DENMARK), INITIATIVE GROUP NETHERLANDS

Viva all the revolutionary and independentist youth movements of the world! Jo ta ke irabazi arte!



that it is young people who have been at the forefront of the movement in taking action it is vital that space is allowed within the timetable for an assembly to take place in which political discussions and decisions on joint action can be made by youth.

But we do not only want a space exclusively for the young activists who have experience of the great mass mobilisations – we need to encourage the participation of thousands of young people new, not just to our movement, but to politics itself. Unfortunately at present the organisation of the ESF can seem impossibly complex and discouraging to young people coming to it for the first time. And indeed young people have not played a major role in shaping and planning the forum up to the present. This proposal gives us a way to bring youth groups and individuals to the heart of the forum and to encourage participation in every aspect of it.

We are proposing:

- ★ A physical space within the forum buildings (not far from the other venues as this will ghettoise the debates and events that take place) where there can be stalls, rooms for youth related or organised seminars/workshops, and cultural events. This way we can all see who else is there, what they do, and what they have to say about it. Also, a space where meetings can be organised spontaneously, to follow up ideas that come out of the other workshops, or to work on proposals for joint action.

- ★ A "theme" within the timetable - highlighted by colour coding or reprinted as a separate list within the programme – showing the times and locations of youth related or organised seminars/workshops and cultural events.

- ★ A youth assembly to bring together the themes of the meetings, discuss strategy and ideas and finally, but most importantly, take decisions on common actions and campaigns.

history of ROMA OPPRESSION

The Roma of Eastern Europe have borne the brunt of recent tabloid racist hysteria in the run up to European Union expansion on May 1st.

A series of stories in recent months have claimed "millions" could "flood the UK" crippling services and milking the system. Bowing to pressure from the campaign the government have said it will limit the entitlement to benefits and services for the new immigrants.

The Roma have been targeted by the media because they form the most oppressed layer of society in many Eastern European states and they are therefore seen as the most likely to want to escape the misery and poverty for the supposed dream of living in the West.

The recent Riots in Slovakia focussed the attention of many on to the real living conditions of the Roma. Many already on the edge of despair - 90% unemployment in the region for Roma - protested at plans to cut their already meagre social benefits by raiding supermarkets for food.

This article examines the roots of the Roma's oppression and explains that for Europe's eight million Roma inhabitants this racism aimed towards them is nothing new.

by kuldip in clapham

The Roma people originally came from India and gradually moved west with the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. By 1300 they had arrived in south east Europe and groups moved further to Western Europe by the 15th century. They are historically a nomadic people that make their living as blacksmiths and by trading and casual labour.

Like the Jews, the Roma can trace their oppression back to the Middle Ages. Due to its stagnation and poverty, feudal society was unable to integrate them and they faced systematic discrimination, particularly under the Church's Inquisition, which unleashed full-scale pogroms against them.

Unlike the Jews however, their social discrimination gave them no specific economic role and they were consigned to a pariah status on the fringes of society. Class divisions within the Roma communities were minimal owing to the lowly status of all. They were excluded from most jobs and their languages and tradition were banned. In what today is Romania, the Roma were actually held in slavery until 1864.

By the twentieth century most of the Roma had settled, and were no longer nomads. But modern capitalism massively increased nationalism and racism - as the ruling elites sought to ensure the loyalty of their working classes and nations competed on the world stage as never before.

What is commonly called the Holocaust is referred to as Porrajmos (the devouring) by the Roma. Estimates of anywhere between 500,000 and 1.5 million Roma were killed by the Nazis. Yet this genocide is seldom acknowledged. During the Nuremberg Trials which followed the World War II, it wasn't even mentioned as the Allies sought to win over the German ruling class.

Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe, which followed the war, had massive effects on the Roma. They were, for the first time, integrated into a modern economy as the huge industrialisation drive

required a huge workforce. A Roma working class was formed and there was some integration into the education system, a small layer of intellectuals emerged, and there was some general improvement in their economic position.

However, this did not mark the end of their social oppression - the Slavic population, on the whole, retained a deeply chauvinist and racist attitude towards the Roma. The Stalinist ruling caste made no serious attempts to overcome it. Fearing a backlash from the majority population, they preferred instead to maintain a conservative outlook within the working class.

The Roma retained a second class status: in the workforce they were in the lowest paid jobs. A study in Hungary in 1970 showed only 11 per cent of workers were qualified workers. The rest were mostly employed in agriculture; in Slovakia too, over 90 per cent of employed Roma were in unskilled jobs.

The children of Roma were often sent to "special schools" because they were considered "backwards". They were described as "socially difficult" or "intellectually underdeveloped". In Hungary in the late 80's, 37% of all children sent to special schools were Roma although they made up only 5% of the population. In Bulgaria, Roma schools were explicitly called "schools for children with underdeveloped life attitudes and culture".

To add to this their very existence as a distinct ethnic minority was denied. According to Stalinists in Czechoslovakia, they were a "socially backward section of the Slovak nation". In Romania, the Romanian word for the Roma - "Tigan" - was banned in official discourse!

As a consequence of this they faced a systematic discrimination against their culture and language. No printed schoolbooks were allowed in the Romanes language nor was the language taught in the schools. Even through this state oppression today 60 per cent of the Roma in Romania speak Romanes as their first language and over 20 per cent in Hungary. In Slovakia over 80 per cent speak it, although not necessarily as their first language.

This basic denial of rights naturally impeded their ability to integrate and as a result massive discrimination of Roma in all parts of East Europe and anti-Roma racism continued.

Their concentration in unskilled and low paid jobs, and poor education meant they were par-



ticularly hard hit when the Stalinist states collapsed and capitalism was restored. Many industrial enterprises and agrarian co-operatives were closed down, and unemployment rocketed amongst the Roma after 1989.

In Slovakia 90 per cent of the 400,000 strong Roma population is unemployed - in some areas in the eastern part of the country it is virtually 100 per cent with little prospect finding work. In Hungary the figure for unemployment amongst the Roma is 60-80 per cent and in the Czech republic 70-90 per cent.

The Roma working class has effectively been destroyed and this has had a dire effect on their well being. The World Bank estimates that in Hungary the number of people living below the poverty line is four or five times higher amongst the Roma than in the rest of the country. In Slovakia they make up 31.6 percent of those who live below the poverty line despite making up just 8.8 percent of the population. Their life expectancy is also considerably shorter at 55 for men and 59 for women - they die on average 12 to 15 years earlier than the majority of Slovak people.

One of the few gains they have made after 1989 is the official recognition of their language and literature. It is now possible to study Romanes at university in Prague and books are also available, but in education as a whole they still face severe discrimination.

Few Roma children attend kindergarten - either because of poverty or hostility from the authorities - and start school at a disadvantage having only spoken Romanes at home. In Macedonia, schoolbooks that have been estimated to cost the equivalent of one month's family income are beyond the reach of the Roma, many of whom live on welfare benefits.

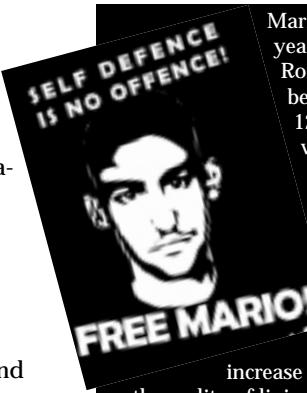
The practice of sending Roma children to "special schools" alongside those with learning difficulties still exists; even in places where they live together with non-Roma, the schools are often segregated.

A result of this is racial discrimination is a decline in educational achievement. Few have high school diplomas and the already high illiteracy rates are growing. In Bulgaria, the number of children who can't read or write rose from 28,897 to 46,406 in the ten years between 1991 and 2001.

Of the eight million Roma living in Europe roughly 6 million live in the East. They are not concentrated in any one geographical area but make up significant minorities in several countries. Several centuries of systematic discrimination have prevented them being integrated into society. Today they are still clearly a racially oppressed minority.

Capitalism needs an "alien" community to victimise. In Eastern Europe the Roma serve this purpose: they are labelled as lazy and as scroungers, carriers of disease and a drain on the rest of society. Unfortunately these abuses are echoed throughout Fortress Europe. In whipping up a racist storm, the right wing media aims to create a backlash against any Roma who choose to settle here.

Through the R.O.A.R campaign Revolution aims to fight against media lies being told about the Roma people. We support and will fight for the full liberation of all oppressed people and see this as an inalienable part of the fight for socialism.



Mario Bango, a 21 year old Slovak Roma has recently been sentenced to 12 years in prison with no chance of parole. His crime was to defend his brother from a Nazi attack.

Racist attacks against the Roma are on the increase in East Europe as the reality of living under capitalism hits large sections of the population. States actively encourage anti-Roma racism to deflect attention from their own failings. Alienated youth look to the parties of the far right for radical solutions.

In the Czech Republic, 20 Roma were murdered by skinheads during the 1990's. As yet no one has been prosecuted for these crimes. Hardly surprising in a society where significant numbers of the police force hold membership of far right organisations.

Mario was arrested and imprisoned three years ago after defending his brother Edo who was attacked by a well-known Slovak Neo-nazi, Bramislav Slamka. During the incident Mario used a small knife - the injuries Slamka sustained from this knife were small and not the cause of his death.

Slamka fell over and hit his head on the ground. Mario himself called the emergency services and Slamka was taken to hospital. Some weeks later he died because of a doctor's negligence - the physician had noticed a small blood clot on Slamka's brain but did nothing about it, causing him to haemorrhage.

Mario was particularly concerned for his younger brother because some months earlier Edo had been hospitalised for two weeks by another group of Nazi skinheads. But in court these facts were ignored.

Robert Fico a leading politician from SMER, a right wing populist party, was a representative for the prosecution. Even the judge made no attempt to hide his views - a day before the trial began he gave an interview in

which he said Mario was guilty of murder.

During the trial, the judge repeatedly interrupted the defence lawyers and told them "not to mix the case with politics" whenever they raised the background of repeated racist attacks faced by Roma.

It was clear that Mario was unlikely to get a fair trial after an official report into the incident following Slamka's death recommended Mario only be tried for "Grievous Bodily Harm" and not "attempted murder" or even "manslaughter". This was ignored by another judge who ruled that Mario would face the charge of "attempted murder".

Following the death of the Nazi, the Slovak parliament held a minutes silence upon the request of a conservative-nationalist politician who described him as an "upstanding citizen". In fact, according to the Slovak anti-racist organisation "People against Racism", he was a member of circle who called themselves "National Socialists" and who took part in a number of racist attacks and attacks on left-wing youth.

In the Slovak media it was claimed that Mario and his brother were robbing passengers on a bus before the incident occurred - a complete lie that was never substantiated.

Mario is currently serving his sentence in a Bratislav jail. Despite his predicament, his morale remains high and he is determined to get through this experience. He is particularly buoyed by the level of international support he has received.

He says' "the support of hundreds of organisations worldwide motivates me a lot. The fact that the Slovakian President Rudolf Shoemaker has had to answer protest letters shows the strength of international pressure."

Revolution is committed to fighting for Mario's release. His case will be going to a higher court of appeal. We need to put the maximum amount of pressure on the Slovak authorities. get involved and get in contact!

www.freemario.org

On May 1st is the accession of 10 eastern states into the EU - Slovakia being one of them. We can use this opportunity to highlight Mario's case and the lack of a fair trial in a racist country which contravenes human rights. Let's turn up the heat on the Slovakian government!

12 DAYS OF PROTEST FOR MARIO BANGO

Day 1: MAY DAY: Day of National Action for Mario
Day 2: hold a meeting explaining Mario's case

Day 3: press day - send press releases to every paper

Day 4: day of postering

Day 5: send postcards of protest to the slovakian authorities

Day 6: day of graffiti

Day 7: day of petitioning for Mario's release (at work/school)

Day 8: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LOCAL ACTION

Day 9: day of fundraising for Mario

Day 10: day of stickering

Day 11: day of letter writing to mario

Day 12: hand in petitions to embassies/govt offices

the only alternative to new labour's treachery...

Build a New Workers' Party!

The Labour Party has proved itself to be nothing less than a party of big business, neo-liberalism, war and racism. In seven years in government, Labour has: taken Britain into 5 different imperialist wars; pushed through back door privatisation in a number of public services (post, healthcare, education, transport); attacked the pay of public sector workers; attacked the rights of asylum seekers; and criminalised young people with the continued use of stop and search laws and campaigns against "anti social behaviour." Most recently there is the ongoing brutal occupation of Iraq and the £3000 tuition fees further impoverishing youth.

Millions of ordinary working class people have grown justifiably disillusioned and angry with this government that so many people had high hopes for when it came to power in 1997. REVOLUTION is not surprised at the treachery of this Labour Party – it has historically played an important role for capitalists in propping up their system. We called for a vote for the Labour Party in the 1997 and 2001 elections not because we expected great things of this government, but because we knew that with Labour in power the illusions that the working class had in them would be broken. This would open the door for an anti capitalist alternative.

With thousands of working class people radicalised by the anti-war movement, the RMT expelled from the Labour Party for changing their political fund affiliation, and a rise in trade union militancy, real mass forces now exist that can be won to the project of a new working class party in Britain.

No Respect?

Other groups on the left have formed "RESPECT – The Unity Coalition". REVOLUTION does not support this initiative and will not join it. Why? Because RESPECT is standing on an explicitly non-working class and non-socialist programme that it hopes will attract the support of not just the working class but the middle classes, too. At the founding convention of RESPECT, a number of people put forward amendments to the programme that said RESPECT should be in favour of no borders, the abolishment of the monarchy and RESPECT MPs should take a workers' wage. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) argued against these amendments saying that we did not want to have arguments about no borders on the doorstep with people, that we didn't want to put off the monarchists, and that George Galloway needed £150 000 to live.

Not only is the programme a dog's dinner of cross class politics, but the RESPECT project seems to be nothing more than an electoral platform. REVOLUTION believes that politics do not begin and end at the ballot box; on the contrary, politics is everywhere - at the workplace, in schools and colleges and on the streets. At best elections can be used as an arena to get people involved in politics and to raise the flag of revolutionary ideas.

Campaign for a new workers party

REVOLUTION will unite around a campaign with all forces that want to build a new workers party. We don't say it has to be revolutionary socialist from the outset, but as revolutionary socialists we will certainly argue our politics within it and hope to win the majority to a revolutionary perspective. If we don't win a majority, we will argue for the right to continue to argue for our politics.

The slogan for a new workers party is such that it means that anti-capitalists, trade union militants and anti-war activists can unite around it without sacrificing their own political ideas. We believe that a new mass workers party must be centred on these groups, entirely democratic in structure and based around a political programme that it fights for. It should not just compete at elections, but also join and aim to lead struggles wherever they exist – pay disputes in the workplaces, struggles against war and imperialism on the streets.

In Liverpool a recent meeting of former Liverpool Dockers kicked off a campaign for a new workers party with a short statement. REVOLUTION supports this initiative but will not sign this statement as we do not think it goes far enough in outlining the betrayals of the Labour government – a racist government that is attacking asylum seekers, a war mongering imperialist government occupying Iraq, etc. However, we will aim to work with them in building a campaign within the trade union movement and the anti capitalist movement for a new working class party.

by I uke in brixton

by matt in canada

what i want i can't have
so i settle for less than
this world is a back stab
such a load on my brain span
leaves my needin a cat scan
tryin to be me be a man
how i'm supposed to act seems pre-planned
all this no i can't stand
rep no loyalty to no brand
materialism is out of hand

look at the situation people judge you on your look
but kids these days don't want to look at a book
shed light on your mind, but tv would rather you blind
buy buy buy or die die die
in a world of what you are is what you are wear
i can't help but not give a fuck i just don't care
but can i go around tellin people they're wrong
i can't even tell if im right
but things don't change its the same every night
i get higher than a bloody kite
i'm tink i'm makin no difference, just waiting for deliverance
stuck in a time that is past-tence
like trying to jump over a fence
look at my life and i feel blessed
got it so much better than much off the rest
tryin to keep my mind clear and free of animosity
live my life freely thinkin i wish i'z in BC

words are just words, add depth and be heard

asylum lies home truths

The mainstream media scapegoats asylum seekers for all of the existing problems that we have in this country - such as the education service, NHS and social housing, just to name a few. These are problems in the UK that are getting worse every single day - but it's not due to the number of asylum seekers but to the Tory policies of the Labour government.

Let's take a look at the housing 'crisis' that the media blames on asylum seekers and refugees. It is a fact that no social housing has been built in the UK since the 1980's; gradually council housing has been sold off to private owners and taken away from the people that desperately need it. Within the shadow of the housing boom, more people are becoming homeless or live in unfit housing conditions. Through the control that the private sector has in housing, they are building the new slums of tomorrow - houses being built in every available square metre but without new facilities being provided in the area. The pri-

vate sector does not think about the wellbeing of a community but is only primarily interested in profit.

Privatisation of social housing is allowing the government to get away with not investing in the improvements that are vitally needed, plus creating an unfair deal for the people who live there in. Under privatisation, evictions are 14% higher, rent is 16% higher on average - in some areas 50% higher - and landlords can introduce extra service charges that are not covered by housing benefit.

John Prescott's housing policy does not go far enough in building "affordable housing"; it is still going to torment the people that are absolutely desperate for a decent roof over the head. More social housing is needed to be built - not "affordable housing" which doesn't have the interests of a large section of the population at heart. All over the country communities are fighting to defend council housing and get the investment that is needed.

Furthermore the media should expose the real root of the housing problem - governmental policy and privatisation - and not use asylum seekers as scapegoats.

by hod in leeds

Here's something interesting: head on over to the FBI's website, and you'll find the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) described as a domestic terrorist organisation: "conduct[ing] acts of politically motivated violence to force segments of society, including the general public, to change attitudes about issues considered important to their causes."

For those unfamiliar with the ELF, they state their aims as: "to inflict economic damage on those profiting from the destruction and exploitation of the natural environment... reveal and educate the public on the atrocities committed against the earth and all species that populate it... [and] take all necessary precautions against harming any animal, human and non-human."

Arguably the most explosive action they've claimed responsibility for so far were four Humvee dealerships set ablaze across Los Angeles one night in August last year. Total damages from ELF actions since 1998 have been claimed to be \$100million. Not an insignificant amount for an organisation with no official membership.

It would seem that the "one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter" dichoto-

my is firmly in place. But beyond impotent emergency-exit-sound-bites, the analysis has gone nowhere.

The problem starts with an obvious, probably deliberate misinterpretation of the ELF's tactics as violent. Whilst they have included arson of property developments and studding trees with spikes to jam chainsaws, they have never been responsible for anyone's death.

When it comes down to it, damage and destruction is not violence if it isn't harming something living that can be violated by it. Property is not alive, and cannot feel terrorised by its treatment.

Under the FBI's statement are the implications of a paradigm shift: We live in a world where capitalism has commodified everything bar the air we breathe (but don't hold your breath), but this is a two way process and the objects and tools of capitalism have simultaneously been personified. This isn't especially new. Corporations in America were granted personhood in 1889, stating that the corporation is a 'natural person' and therefore granted constitutional rights, such as the right to free speech, and the right to silence.

Harming capitalism can now be seen as violence. Hurting capitalism and fighting its spread is classed as and treated as terrorism.

Whilst in developed, imperialist countries, capitalism uses the agencies of state to bulldoze opposition, in the semi-colonial world, capitalism is hiring the paramilitaries, as witnessed by the number of Coca Cola workers who have been disappeared in Columbia.

The disparity between the ELF's actions and the actual human cost of capitalism, with deliberate misrepresentation of the former and ignorance of the latter on the state's part, only seeks to distort the meaning of violence.

However, the solution is not to bend to the state's new definitions be constricted by yet another mental constraint. The solution is to look beyond the semantic war and not rule out the tactics that could work: incisive strikes of criminal damage to mass actions and shutdowns.

<http://www.earthliberationfront.com>
<http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress02/jarboe021202.htm>
http://www.reclaimdemocracy.org/personhood/personhood_timeline.pdf

by marc in brum

sabotage

sexual



understanding the roots of women's oppression

Looking at the world around us, the oppression of women is so consistent that it would be easy to see it as an ingrained feature of human life. Women's oppression did exist before the rise of capitalism - in peasant and feudal societies. However, for the vast majority of our prehistory, humans have not lived in these types of societies but as nomadic hunter-gatherers. Some of the few remaining societies of this kind such as the !Kung San of the Kalahari desert have been studied by anthropologists, who have found them to be far more sexually egalitarian than any settled peoples.

These societies do have a sexual division of labour - men are the hunters while women gather plant foods - but the difference from our society is that the work of women is not denigrated or seen as less important than that of men. In these societies, women have more economic power than the men because the plant food they gather is readily available and they can choose how to distribute it; whereas the big game that the men catch have to be shared among the band in proscribed ways.

This food sharing has two effects: 1) no one is able to accumulate resources by storing surplus; and 2) men cannot dominate women: on the contrary, men must rely on a woman to provide them with plant food, the bulk of their diet.

Therefore, it is easy for a woman to leave her husband and fend for herself; women do not have to put up with abusive relationships as they often do in modern society.

Another important difference from settled societies is that hunter-gatherer women are not confined in any way to an isolating 'domestic sphere' because of the mobility of the group and the structure of the community. Although much of their time is taken up by childcare, this does not make them cut off from the communal work in private homes in the way that modern urban mothers are. They carry out socially productive work that is beneficial to the society within the communal space.

Anthropologists then compared these groups with settled societies in similar regions, which were found to be far more oppressive to women. The most important reason for this is the existence of private property (through the accumulation of surplus) in these settled societies: in order for a man to ensure its transmission to his heir, the nuclear family becomes necessary and is transformed into the basic economic unit of society.

Therefore, a woman and her children become dependent on an individual man, and the woman's status and freedom declines. Her sexual freedom is restricted to her husband and her work to upkeep the family becomes privatised.

As production becomes increasingly for exchange rather than immediate use, the woman's work becomes a necessary but socially subordinate part of producing an exchangeable surplus. In a sedentary society where each nuclear family lives in a separate house, a woman's work is also increasingly pushed into a separate 'domestic' sphere which is devalued in relation to the 'public' or 'political' sphere which men come to dominate.

Therefore these seemingly remote and obscure societies reveal some points about women's oppression that are very important for socialists. Firstly, the oppression of women is not inevitable: there have been societies where women's work is equally valued and it is possible for this to be the case again. Secondly, the cause of

women's oppression is not the existence of men, but private property and the system of production for profit. Women's oppression can not be fought by forming all women's groups and excluding men - but by a joint effort of male and female youth and workers towards the destruction of the capitalist system that oppress us all. **by nat in cambridge**

POLICE FORCE STRIVES FOR GREATER EFFICIENCY BY CARRYING OUT TWO KINDS OF SOCIAL OPPRESSION AT ONCE!

Police have failed to respond to calls for help from Asian women in cases of domestic violence because they did "not want to offend Asian men", say women's group Southall Black Sisters. Police often try to "mediate" between women and their violently abusive husbands, acting as some kind of marriage guidance counselling service instead of enforcing laws on violent assault. SBS have also found that local police believe that Asian women experience violence in "a different cultural context." (If you've been listening to David Blunkett, you'll know that most of these Asian men are probably bogus-asylum-seeking Al Q'Aeda members, so presumably their wives should be grateful they haven't been blown up).

Surely they can't think (or can they?) that it's OK to beat Asian women or that Asian men are inherently aggressive and violent - so what does this mean? Is this a radical new direction for the Police Force? Will we soon see the same understanding support offered to other offenders? As anti-capitalist activists, will we be able to explain that it is 'our culture' to break through police lines, and be offered a mediation service so that we can explain this to the G8?

No. It means that the police force are security guards for capitalism, and have a greater interest in perpetuating racist myths and covering up their own consistent racism than in responding effectively to the violent oppression of women.



revolution

FILM REVIEW:

Lilya 4-Ever

Watching the film *Lilya 4-Ever* (from Swedish director Lukas Moodysson) moved me - having quite an effect on me, as any good film should. The story revolves around Lilya, a teenage girl struggling to live somewhere in the decaying ex-Soviet Union. Eventually she is tricked into being smuggled abroad and is forced into life of an underground prostitute - what in essence is sexual slavery.

The reason this struck me is that I realised that this is going on every day all over Europe (let alone the world). We are never told whereabouts Lilya is from - the idea is that this happens everywhere. The UN estimates about 2 million women are trafficked globally per year. It is worth noting that from Albania alone over 65% are under the age of 18. No one knows how many are trafficked into Britain - few are counting because it's a low police priority.

The Metropolitan Police estimate that around 75% percent of London's prostitutes are foreign: a mixture of those who were kidnapped, tricked here with lures of other jobs, or an optimistic view of life as an up-market escort. Once here, they are kept by violence, huge debt-bondage and threats against their family back home. They are led to believe that if they attempt escape, they will be sent home - resulting in reprisals again them or their family, or worse with the cycle beginning again. And if they try to run to the police, without passports or documentation they are on the next flight out of here.

Do Women Ever Get a Good Deal Out of God?

It is important to fight against the demonisation of Muslims that is being perpetuated to hide the real motives behind the "War on Terror" and deeply racist asylum and immigration policies. It is also important to defend the rights of individuals to wear the hijab, to school or anywhere else. But we shouldn't forget that the major religions have all initiated, perpetuated and encouraged the oppression of women - whether through time and place specific interpretations (like female genital mutilation) or through axiomatic ideas (like women being the origin of all sin and needing to be eternally punished through the pain of childbirth... bad Eve.)

This doesn't come as any surprise if you see religion as a way of giving a good story - well, some kind of story - to an ideology necessary for social control, in order to make it easier to swallow. Marx called religion "the opiate of the masses" because it is designed to keep us docile in the hope of "pie in the sky when we die." But he also meant that it keeps us going - it gives the working classes an often beautiful narrative about our lives that transcends the everyday reality of oppression, and tells us to be good, and wait until we're dead.

The racist policies of Fortress Europe mean that people who leave their countries to escape poverty and exploitation have to do so illegally. And a new found immigration frenzy means they'll likely be sent back if they attempt to escape

It is the culture of xenophobia and scaremongering created by the right wing press that results in situations such as this being ignored. Every day we are warned of "marauding foreigners" ready to exploit the welfare systems of Western governments, creating a culture of ignorance against those who need help. Unfortunately, overblown stories of 'bogus refugees' mean that these women are slotted into the same category. It is more difficult to find sympathy in the public consciousness when people are subjected to so many of these stories by those in positions of power (such as the media).

Until such attitudes are changed, similar situations will continue with most of the world unawares. I am supportive of 10 new members joining the EU in May, and I sincerely hope such a shift will reduce this problem - giving people better opportunities. However I dread it will continue or possibly expand in countries that aren't joining. Even in countries that are joining on May 1st, I worry the problem won't be eradicated as comprehensively as it should: temporary (but for who knows how long?) controls on the eastern countries' limits their citizens from the same freedom of employment and benefits enjoyed by older EU nations such as Germany, France, Belgium etc : business for the traffickers may yet not be over.

BY SAM IN MANX



How should we look?

Alyona Pisklova a girl with a "generous" form made it into the media this week after being disqualified from becoming the Russian Miss Universe entry for not having "an angular hour glass figure"

The organisers said that she had been banned because the internet voting system had been hijacked by anti-globalisationists that were running a "anti-Barbie" campaign from their website at stopbarbie.org.ru. The website says that people no longer want to see "girls who do not look natural and who all look the same." Before her ban, Alyona had become the runaway leader of the pageant with 39,000 votes at least twice as many as her nearest competitor.



The same goes for religious ideas about women - they don't all seem bad. Catholics worship the Virgin Mary, and Gandhi saw a clear role for women as embodying the essence of Hinduism and a new India. But

the truth is, it's not much fun on the pedestal, and it's really easy to fall off (especially as women's sexuality seems to be very problematic for everybody). A return to fundamentalism, assisted by George and Tony's New Crusades, will see a return to women's oppression in all faiths. And not just within the religious realm - just as Hitler said that women's lives should revolve around children, the kitchen and the church, the BNP are not content with racism - they do sexism pretty well, too. At the moment the return of women's oppression may be taking the form of annoying or insulting adverts, but we may only be seeing the tip of the iceberg.

by rachel in crouch end

One of the organisers said, "It was going to take a lot of skill to present this girl as a typical example of Russian beauty." However people have been left wondering how it is so hard to believe that people don't find her attractive. Does the media dictate what we should and should not see as beautiful? Has capitalism even invaded our love lives now? Will we soon be banded from dating if we do not fit into what is seen as beautiful?

The answer lies in a quote from the Guardian: "If she won, the organisers knew they would have a problem selling her to advertisers." Bingo - capitalism madness.

by davey d in stockwel

F R E E PALESTINE



As the construction of the separation wall continues to rob land in the Palestinian territories, Ariel Sharon presented his new murderous, unilateral plan. Sharon's project - backed enthusiastically by Bush - is to withdraw Israeli troops from all of Gaza (except for the border zone with Egypt), BUT retain control of Gaza's airspace and coastline and the Erez border crossing, which is the only point at which Palestinians can cross into Israel.

In the West Bank, Sharon plans to hold on to the Israeli settlements that have already been established as facts on the ground. This means that the Apartheid wall will cut into and isolate parts of the Palestinian territory, creating a joke of a 'state' made up of discontinuous bits of land surrounded by Israeli's checkpoints. The area around Jenin, for example, will be partially enclosed by the separation barrier.

In order to try and calm the likely critics, Israel will withdraw from four token small settlements in the West Bank, whilst retaining the larger ones - around 200 settlements.

All in all, it is clear that Sharon is seeking to impose the most reactionary version of the two states solution - one that is shaped by accommodation to the settlers and denial of the rights of the Palestinian population. The proposal makes no mention of the right to return of thousands of Palestinian refugees currently living in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

So, why this plan and why now?

Sharon has been losing support in Israel: the economy is slow; the issue of 'security' is not being solved by the increasing number of attacks on Palestinians; and Sharon's promise to murder their leaders is not resulting in an end to the resistance to the Israeli occupation.

The offer to withdraw Israeli troops from Gaza might look like an act of goodwill, but it's not to be celebrated as a victory. Sharon has finally concluded that Israel has little to gain by hanging onto the Gaza Strip. It's a stronghold of Hamas and the most militant

sector of the Palestinian people - and has little to offer in economic terms.

On the contrary, any plan to withdraw from the West Bank would cause internal turmoil amongst those sections of the Israeli population whose comfortable life depends on the benefits acquired through the occupation.

George Bush was all to happy to applaud this unilateral plan, conceived without consultation of the Palestinian leaders. The US elections are getting closer and Bush, with the ever growing crisis in Iraq, is keen to show some sort of success in foreign policy and regain his lost credibility. As the 'Road Map for Peace' has virtually stalled, Sharon's plan couldn't have come at a better time for him.

What Sharon's plan ultimately shows is the impossibility of the two states solution. This has been the traditional strategy of the Israeli Left (like Peace Now and Gush Shalom) and the leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation for the past 20 years. The idea is to maintain a Jewish state while granting the Palestinians 'self-determination' within a dependent West Bank and Gaza.

There are various problems with this. For example the Israeli peace groups completely ignore the Palestinian refugees' right to return to the land they were expelled from in 1948. Furthermore, an ethnic Jewish state will be an anti-democratic solution for the 20% Palestinian-Arab second-class citizens of Israel.

In fact, the Palestinian-Arab population in Israel is growing and will probably form a majority in a not too distant future - which will make the two-state solution even more utopian and unworkable.

The only solution to the Palestinian question is a democratic one-state solution. Israel will have to recognise the historic wrong done to the Palestinians and recognise the right of Palestinians to return to their stolen lands. The Jews will have to abandon all legal and economic privileges over the other inhabitants of the country. But this requires the revolutionary overthrow of Zionism by the combined forces of Jewish workers and the oppressed Palestinian people. In order to live in prosperity and with equal rights the Palestinian and Jewish working class will also have to expropriate private property in industry and land. Nationalisation of industries and collectivisation of the land will be the only way in which the working class will put an end to the conflict.

by fran in peckham

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